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HOW TO FAIL AS A POPSTAR

Play and Original Songs Written and Performed by

Vivek Shraya

February 18-March 1, 2020 - Berkeley Street Upstairs Theatre



“Shraya, a transgender artist, is making a name for herself as a real cultural powerhouse. Part of the reason for that is undoubtedly her honesty and her hopefulness.” – Toronto Star

“Cultural rocket fuel.” – Vanity Fair

“Vivek Shraya has so much soul, she can’t contain it in one genre.” – Now Magazine

“Vivek Shraya is the artist we need right now.” – Art Gallery of Ontario

Polaris Music Prize nominee, visual artist, filmmaker, publisher and bestselling author (*I’m Afraid of Men*) Vivek Shraya makes her Toronto theatre debut with the autobiographic musical experience, *HOW TO FAIL AS A POPSTAR*, on stage at the Berkeley Street Upstairs Theatre, Feb 18-March 1.

FOR CANADIAN STAGE: BRENDAN HEALY, Artistic Director MONICA ESTEVES, Executive Director
ALEXANDRA BAILLIE Board Chair

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Directed by Canadian Stage Artistic Director Brendan Healy, *HOW TO FAIL AS A POPSTAR* traces Vivek's story from her early childhood days in Edmonton where she sang Hindu bhajans to impress God on the weekend and New Kids on the Block during the week to impress her classmates; to her teenage years performing in singing competitions at the West Edmonton Mall; recording her first pop album (which was paid for with a \$20,000 bank loan co-signed by her mother); and eventually moving to Toronto to pursue her pop star dreams (only to have them thwarted by a domineering, online bingo addicted manager).

Through storytelling, movement and song, Vivek charts her journey to "not quite" pop music superstardom, creating a moving theatrical performance that is a reflection on the power of pop culture, dreams, disappointments, self-determination, and finding one's authentic voice.

"This is my story growing up in Edmonton as a brown, queer kid and being obsessed with Much Music and wanting to make it as a pop star," says Vivek Shraya. "The joke I've made is that it's kind of like 'A Star Isn't Born.' That's what this story is. I was also watching a lot of music biography movies and most of them follow a similar narrative. I was excited about whether there was value to the story of an artist who doesn't make it. This isn't to discredit my work as a writer or whatever. But, to be honest, that was never my dream. I always feel ungrateful when I say that because it's not that I'm not thrilled to have people who are familiar with my work as a writer. But as a kid and as a teenager, my dream was always to be a pop star or a rock star."

"A prolific creator, Vivek excels at everything she does," says Canadian Stage Artistic Director Brendan Healy. "I have followed her career for years and when Canadian Stage had the opportunity to work with her, we jumped at the chance. Fearless in her art, Vivek tackles complex questions of race, gender and identity. With this work, she returns to her first and greatest love: music."

HOW TO FAIL AS A POPSTAR is on stage at the Berkeley Street Upstairs Theatre on Tuesday's, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 8 PM, Fridays at 7 PM and Sundays at 2 PM. Tickets can be purchased at canadianstage.com or by calling the box office at 416-368-3110 or in person at the Berkeley Street box office located at 26 Berkeley Street.

ABOUT VIVEK SHRAYA

Vivek Shraya is an artist whose body of work crosses the boundaries of music, literature, visual art, theatre, and film. Her best-selling book *I'm Afraid of Men* was heralded by *Vanity Fair* as "cultural rocket fuel," and her album with Queer Songbook Orchestra, *Part-Time Woman*, was nominated for the Polaris Music Prize. She is one half of the music duo Too Attached and the founder of the publishing imprint VS. Books. A five-time Lambda Literary Award finalist, Vivek was a Pride Toronto Grand Marshal, was featured on *The Globe and Mail's* Best Dressed list and has received honours from The Writers' Trust of Canada and The Publishing Triangle. She is a director on the board of the Tegan and Sara Foundation and an Assistant Professor of Creative Writing at the University of Calgary.

vivekshraya.com @VivekShraya #popstarplay

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ABOUT CANADIAN STAGE

Canadian Stage's mission is to be the leading contemporary performing arts organization in the country. A collision of disciplines and cultures, Canadian Stage reflects the dynamism and complexity of Canada and is a vital artistic force locally, nationally, and internationally. In its over thirty-year history, Canadian Stage has employed thousands of artists and developed and produced hundreds of new productions. Many of the plays developed by Canadian Stage have been awarded and nominated for Canada's most prestigious literary and performing arts honours, including Governor General's, Chalmers and Dora Mavor Moore Awards. Throughout the theatre season, nearly 100,000 patrons attend performances and workshops in our three Toronto venues. Throughout our history, Canadian Stage has provided outstanding education and outreach programs cultivating a diverse audience demographic.

**To receive further information, please contact CATHY PAINE
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